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THE
Annual Report

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER
OF HEALTH

FOR THE

Urban District of Northam
IN DEVON

For the Year 1946

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BIDEFORD :
Polypress Ltd., North Road, Bideford

Annual Report, 1946.

I.—Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area.

AREA—4261 Acres.

POPULATION—Estimated Resident, 6051.

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1946 according to the rate books, 2100.

Rateable value, £35,606.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £145.

Social and Physical Conditions.

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards, which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential; Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort.

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

Under the name of Kipling Tors, a hillside overlooking Bideford Bay and situated in the south-western area of Westward Ho! has recently been purchased as part of a Kipling Memorial and handed over to the National Trust. This land is about 18 acres in extent, and is a welcome addition to the free beauties of the district.

2.—Vital Statistics in 1946.

Births and Birth Rate.

The total of live births in the District was 96, of which 42 were boys and 54 girls.

There was 1 still birth registered (1 girl).

The live birth rate per 1000 of the population was 16.01, that for England and Wales being 19.1.

The still birth rate per 1000 was 0.16, that for England and Wales being .?????

Deaths and Death Rate.

The total deaths were 89 (51 males and 38 females), but 31 of these were 70 years of age or over

The death rate per 1000 of the population was 13.53, that for England and Wales being 11.5.

There were 4 deaths of infants under 1 year; 41.67 per 1000 live births.

The following Table gives the causes of death in the District during 1946 :

| CAUSES | MALE | FEMALE |
|--|------|--------|
| Whooping Cough | — | 11 |
| Heart Disease | 19 | 15 |
| Other Circulatory Diseases | — | — |
| Bronchitis | 1 | — |
| Pneumonia | — | 2 |
| Other Respiratory Diseases (except T.B.) | 2 | — |
| Cancer | 6 | 6 |
| Diabetes | — | 1 |
| Cerebral Haemorrhage | 5 | 7 |
| Influenza | — | 1 |
| Gastric Ulcer | 2 | — |
| Other Digestive Diseases | 1 | — |
| Nephritis | 2 | — |
| Tuberculosis (Respiratory) | 4 | — |
| Do. (other forms) | — | — |
| Premature Birth | 1 | — |
| Congenital Malformation | — | 1 |
| Road Accident | 1 | — |
| Other Violent Causes | 2 | 1 |
| All other causes | 5 | 3 |
| Total ... | 51 | 38 |

There were no deaths from Measles, or other infectious diseases of children.

3.—General Provision of Health Services in the Area.

(1) Public Health Officers of the Authority.

There are three Public Health Officers for the Council—the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Inspector, and the duties of Water Inspector are in the hands of the Council's Surveyor.

(2) Nursing Arrangements in Area.

There are two Voluntary Nursing Associations in the District, one for Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill, the other for Appledore. Both Associations employ fully qualified nurses, who also act as midwives.

(3) Hospitals.

The District is provided for by the Bideford and District Hospital, which is supported partly by voluntary contributions and partly by patients' fees. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains about 66 beds.

The Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935.

(4) Ambulances.

There are now in Bideford an up-to-date Motor Ambulance for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases, and an Ambulance in connection with, and kept at, the Isolation Hospital.

(5) Clinics and Treatment Centres.

A treatment centre for Venereal Diseases and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District. Tuberculous patients are admitted to Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria.

An orthopaedic clinic is also held at Barnstaple. There are now two Resident Children's Nurseries in the district. One under the control of the Devon County Council.

4.—Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Northam Water Supply.

The water supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish, and about nine miles from Northam. A scheme to increase the capacity of the reservoir was completed in 1942, adding another 10 million gallons to the former storage capacity of about 30 millions. Owing to the numerous visitors, including evacuees and military in the District, the public are earnestly requested to abstain from waste and to see that leaking taps are repaired as soon as possible.

A periodic analysis, both chemical and bacteriological, of the water is taken annually as a routine. Analysis of the water reports a satisfactory standard of bacteriological and chemical purity.

Rainfall for 1946.

The total rainfall for 1946 was 64.40 inches, compared with 54.33 inches in 1945. The highest rainfall was 8.75 inches in November and the lowest 1.64 inches in March.

These figures were taken at Melbury Waterworks (which are about 500 feet above sea level), and are considerably higher than those taken at the Royal North Devon Golf Club at sea level, where 41.39 inches only were registered during the year.

Drainage and Sewerage.

The only river affected by sewage is tidal. There is, however, a small stream polluted by sewage water running through the south-west area of Northam District and draining a laundry and over a dozen residences. This stream is now, since the alteration of boundaries, under the control of the Northam Council. Endeavours are still being made to remedy the nuisance by trenching, but sooner or later a piping scheme may have to be carried out if the present scheme is not satisfactory.

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made numerous inspections of a sanitary nature. Complaints of nuisances were all remedied after serving of informal notices.

(b) There are 5 Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

5.—Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk Supply.

There are 23 registered dairymen in the District, 22 producers and 1 retailer. Samples of milk were taken for examination and analysis. Any samples which failed to pass the tests were reported on, and further samples in each case were passed as satisfactory.

Inspections of cowsheds were made, and any defective conditions remedied. No evidence of Tuberculosis was found in any milk supplied.

Bakehouses.

There are 7 Bakehouses in the District. All were inspected and found satisfactory.

Slaughterhouses.

All slaughtering is at present carried out at the Public Abbatoir in Bideford.

6.—Housing.

Several houses were inspected under the Housing Acts or Public Health regulations. There was no action taken under statutory powers during the year. Disinfection of rooms was carried out where necessary.

7.—Prevention of and Control over Infectious Diseases.

During the year 2 cases of Whooping Cough, 9 of Measles, 2 Pneumonia, 2 cases of Scarlet Fever, and one case of Cerebro Spinal Meningitis, were notified. The last case was removed to the Isolation Hospital.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out personally by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is supplied free by the Council in necessitous cases. A Clinic is held for the purposes of immunisation against Diphtheria as required.

No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, or under Section 62 of the Public Health Act, 1935.



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